



JESUS

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Image courtesy of Wiki Commons.

This painting, which hangs in the Side-Chapel of Keble College Oxford, is the original by Holman Hunt, painted in 1853 and first hung in the Royal Academy in 1854.

The artist began the picture when he was a little over 21 years old, but it was not until he was 29 that he finished it. One of the reasons for this length of time was his desire to perfect the dawn, and this he did not succeed in doing until he took the picture with him to the Middle East and found the perfect dawn outside Bethlehem. When he was nearly 70 years old, he painted a replica which hangs in St Paul's Cathedral, London.

There are two lights shown in the picture. The lantern is the light of conscience and the light around the head is the light of salvation with the door representing the human soul, which cannot be opened from the outside. There is no handle on the door, and the rusty nails and hinges overgrown with ivy denote that the door has never been opened and that the figure of Christ is asking for permission to enter.

The bright light over the figure is the morning star, the dawn of the new day, and the autumn weeds and fallen fruit represent the autumn of life. The writing under the picture, which is rather hard to read, is taken from Revelation 3 'Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me.'

The Light of the world

Part 1. *Joh 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Joh 1:9 That was the true Light, which **lighteth every man** that cometh into the world.*

We take our domestic lights for granted in our day and age but can you imagine a time not so long ago when it was a luxury? In Tudor times you would get up when the sun came up and go to bed when the sun set. The only light in your house came from the fire or from rushlights (candles made from reeds dipped in animal fat) which gave off very little light and stank. You got home in time to eat your last meal of the day in daylight and then it was bedtime for most people. You can imagine what fears the dark conjured up in the imagination, during the long winter nights? We had a taste of it back in 1973 with the power cuts.

Today a quarter of humanity live without electricity (1.6Bn people) burning unhealthy kerosene lamps, spending as much as 30 per cent of their income on a fuel that causes indoor air pollution and fires. Can you imagine how light alone can change the domestic lives of people?

It seems so obvious that we need light to navigate our way around that we scarcely consider it and in glory, darkness will be a thing of the past. *Rev 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and **they need no candle, neither light of the sun;** for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.* There is a reminder here that in the beginning, there was light without the light bearer (the sun).

Have you ever wondered why God created light? Why we are so dependent upon it? God could have made other ways to navigate without eyes but light is a figure for God Himself. It was a way to show Himself to the world. *Joh 9:5 As long as I am in the world, **I am the light of the world.*** Light and sight was a way to present things to the mind that touch, hearing, smell, taste could never do. Also God Himself has “eyes” but He sees far more than we do. *Pro 15:3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* They can see morality.

God enlightens us in Christ, so that with the once blind man we can exclaim, “Now, I see!”. *Joh 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* There is a true light and by the same token there must be a false light, remember the angel of light? Now God says, *Psa 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.* In other words, you can borrow My eyes. If you want to, you can see the world as I see it. You will see that moral dimension that natural, blind men cannot. Its up to you?

I am not sure whether many Christians understand this point. The world you see is not necessarily the world that God is looking at. You may see good in everybody, God doesn't, *Mar 10:18 ..there is none good but one, that is, God.* You may believe God doesn't create evil, but He does, *Isa 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.* You may believe all ways to God are valid, God doesn't, *Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* God's view of the World can be totally different to the view that we have.

If Christ is the light of the world and Jesus lightens that world, why do so many people who call themselves Christians, hold such different views to Christ? Why does the CoE allow the ordination of gay priests as long as they are celibate? What is clear is that the Christian (CHRIST's) world view is not part of the life of many religious people. Their view is a synthesis, a composite of other non-Christian ideas, which determine what they believe. If George Barna's assessment of US churches holds valid for the UK, then we see that only 14% of born again adults rely on the Bible as their moral compass.

A brother reminds us of the day of judgement,

"I think a LOT of God's children will be embarrassed when He calls out the final score and says, "Jimmy! Since I forgave your sins and made you my child 38 years ago you have watched 328,921 hours of TV including 258,427 hours of sports; missed church 4,836 times; read my Word an average of 17 seconds/day over the span of your Christian life.... and witnessed to a TOTAL of 32 people. Here is your reward..."

We shall see how at variance we are with Jesus world view and method.

Jesus' World view

World Part 2. *Joh 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the World, and **men loved darkness** rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Evil loves the cover of darkness, evil espouses ignorance.*

You have probably seen the letters WWJD (What would Jesus do?). I want to ask, "What would Jesus think?" (WWJT). I want to try and find out what Jesus' **World view** was (the overall perspective from which Jesus sees and interprets the World) and ask if we have the same view as He does.

The first question we should ask is do we want the Light of Christ in our thoughts or not? *Psa 10:4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.* The German Christian astronomer Johannes Kepler said that through his study of the Universe, he was "thinking God's thoughts after him." Why limit it to astronomy?

Herman Dooyeweerd (1894 - 1977) was a Dutch Christian philosopher who suggested that the Christian's basic orientation to the World ought NOT to be derived from human speculation, but from God's revealed purposes: Creation, the Fall into sin, and Redemption in Christ. In other words, a World view that should NOT proceed from our experience of everyday life as we see it (he called this naive experience). He showed that all philosophy is derived from this "naïve" World view and that "theoretical thought" or "your philosophy" derived from this, would contain error. What he is saying is that you cannot escape the way you were brought up as it will affect the way you think and your outlook on life. The Jesuit maxim went, "Give me the child for seven years, and I will give you the man." We are what we were fed. You are what you eat.

Let us consider some of the things which have **shaped our views** of the World around us. Our country of birth, our time and culture, our socio-economic group, our parents and the way they did things, our media exposure, our teachers and what we learned at school, our religion to name a few. These influences **mould our beliefs** on our origins, the origin of life, the origin of the universe, the nature of law and punishment, morality and moral absolutes, human relationships, truth, religion and death and so on. We are to a very large extent the product of our genes and the environment that they emerged into.

Yet Jesus says that all of that lies in darkness and that philosophy cannot find Him, because, *1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, **I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.** Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this World? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this World?* You cannot reason your way to God, it comes by the special revelation of the cross of Christ. The cross lights OUR World.

A definition of philosophy is the Investigation of the nature, causes, or principles of reality, knowledge, or values, based on logical reasoning (is this possible with a corrupt heart and a sinful mind?), rather than empirical (provable) methods. It is the pursuit of wisdom. God says that without

Him your wisdom is foolishness and He will actively destroy it. Any philosophy class that does not involve the Crucified Christ is doomed to failure. It is unlit and unenlightened philosophy.

The fact is that the unregenerate (not-Christian) mind cannot know the truth, *1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: **neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned**.....1Co 2:16But we have the mind of Christ.* That mind is developed by a process of renewal, *Rom 12:2 Don't be like the people of this World, but let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him.* CEV.

The point that we arrive at is this. That you can try to work your way through life as a Christian, using your old way of thinking, your naïve thoughts, or you can transform your mind and start to think things through as Jesus would have done.

Instead of using your corrupt World view, you start to develop a World view that aligns with Jesus World view. For example, regarding death. It is not a subject many people like to talk about but like taxes, it is one of the two certainties of life. It is never welcome and never convenient but it comes and it comes differently to the believer than the unbeliever. It is not the end of existence but the beginning of life. It is a future in Christ, because of Christ who is also the Creator.

What Jesus does as “The Light of the World”, is to cast His light on the things around about us. We might say that because of Christ, we see things in a new light. Things are delineated differently by that light and we see their true shape and meaning. In fact, without a Creator God, there is no meaning in the Universe at all. It would just exist as a valueless heap of atoms with no absolute moral values. It would be what anyone wanted it to be or mean.

The philosopher Nietzsche was right, that if “God was dead” and that life has no meaning (nihilism or nothingness), then anything goes. Nietzsche spent his last days in a mental institution, a fitting end, some would say.

True enlightenment

Joh 12:46 I am come a light into the World, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

We have been considering how Jesus views the World, His **World view**, which should also be our World view. I believe that many who say they are Christians fail to obtain this Divine World view and as a result are in darkness on many issues in life.

They are not enlightened because they do not believe the person and words of Jesus. They fail to let Christ take over their mind. They fail to ask for enlightenment, *Psa 119:18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.* This verse also shows that we have no intuitive or natural understanding of God’s law. It comes by revelation from God alone.

The great blocking factor to seeing the World as it is, is sin. *2Co 4:4 The god who rules this World has **blinded the minds of unbelievers.** They cannot see the light, which is the good news about our glorious Christ, who shows what God is like.* CEV. What does it say about the minds of those “Born again” Christians, according to Barna, of whom only 14% accept the Bible as their moral compass? Something is very wrong with their understanding and something will be very wrong in their direction.

The ministry of Jesus opens a whole new view on life and the World in which we live. It is a view which transcends the here and now. Let me explain what I mean. It is a view which goes far beyond the confines of this World and this life. It takes a view from Heaven. For example Jesus' view on family. Family to most people are those who are related to us by birth and genetics. Not so to Jesus, it is far more than that. *Mat 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.* He is saying my family obeys God.

Jesus family consists of His practicing followers, the "doers" of the faith. Some may well have been related genetically (through Mary) but anyone in His family who didn't obey the Father would not get special treatment. Our relatives do not get eternal favours because we are Christians, they have to open their own account in the Bank of Faith. Our love for Jesus must rise above the earthly ties of family, *Mat 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* We are THE sons of God no longer the sons of men.

You see how Jesus view of "family" transcends our earthly idea of family? It views family not from the position of earthly headship (earthly father) but from the new relationship with the Creator, the heavenly Father. It sees relationships from God's point of view. **God is our real Father** who planned and made us for Himself. My real father is the Creator, my earthly father was not. That is why relationships in this life are temporary (meaning for a time only). Marriage is temporary, *Mat 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.* Marriage gives way to the eternal relationships.

Jesus World view is a view from heaven. It is a view that we should also adopt as children of our heavenly Father. Oliver Wendell Holmes, the Harvard Doctor cynically said that, "Some people are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good". He was wrong. If people are not heavenly minded they cannot be of earthly use. If they cannot see the World eye to eye with God they cannot work with Him in it.

We can make a list of subjects, that from Jesus' World viewpoint differ from the viewpoint of sinful man. In fact, we would know little of these things were it not for Jesus describing them to us, things like:

- The nature of God,
- The Creation,
- The Son of God,
- The Holy Spirit, Law,
- Family,
- Marriage,
- Divorce,
- Fornication,
- Homosexuality,
- Lust,
- Forgiveness and Forgiving,
- Mercy,
- Revenge,
- Reconciliation,
- Atonement,
- Greed,
- Giving,
- Prayer,
- Miracles,
- Faith,
- Worry,

- Death,
- Life after death,
- Discipleship,
- Judgement,
- Greed,
- Use of Alcohol,
- Drunkenness,
- Honesty,
- Authority,
- Blessings from God,
- Murder,
- Anger,
- Oaths,
- Charity (alms),
- Prayer,
- Riches,
- Contentment,
- Hypocrisy,
- Attitude to fellow men,
- Foundation of works,
- Healing,
- Resurrection,
- Fear,
- New Birth,
- Providence,
- Love,
- Evil,
- the devil,
- Possession,
- Hell,
- Eternal punishment..... and so on.

May God light our candle so that we can see as He does. *Psa 18:28 For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.*

The world view

Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

We saw that the World can be viewed from planet Earth or from Heaven, from man's point of view or Heaven's lofty heights. If you want to see a summary of life from man's viewpoint then read Ecclesiastes. I have never found it a happy book. It grinds its way through the things of life until man arrives at his "long home" (grave), whence in retrospect all is vanity or emptiness, *Ecc 12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.*

Well, it is vanity, seen from an earthly perspective. If I cannot rise above that, it is all 'shadows and dust', vanity, change and decay, grief, labouring for wind, vexation of spirit, grief under the sun and so on. Job's so called comforters have the same limited vision and attribute Job's condition to sin

rather than the purpose of God, *Job 42:7the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.* Even Job is rebuked for his ignorance, *Job 38:1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?*

So many times in life we are tempted to derive our theology from our limited understanding of what we think we see. Poor Job is condemned by Eliphaz *Job 4:7 Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?* Bad things, he is saying, do not happen to good people. Do not join him by making theological inferences that are not backed by the Word of God. These people lacked a Divine World view. They were unguided.

We learn many times of Jesus' compassion to both multitudes and individuals. *Luk 7:13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.* (read). The Greek word for compassion is related to the bowels, it is a "gut feeling". Such feelings are human but can be untempered and unrestrained. If Jesus had not been restrained, all would have been raised from the dead, all fed and watered, all healed and healthy but He was constrained. *Luk 11:2 Thy kingdom come. **Thy will be done**, as in heaven, so in earth.* Jesus acted from the Father's will, from the Father's purpose and perspective, not from His own. It was not the time for Him to put all things right.

Peter initially lacked a Divine World view. Peter's seemingly well meaning defence of Jesus against His death on the cross received a stark rebuke. *Mat 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* Peter's World view was satanic. To have protected Christ against His death and resurrection would have condemned humanity to eternal damnation. No death no forgiveness.

The alternative to God's World view is a satanic World view. It is a view that distorts reality and deceives mankind. *Rev 12:9... That ancient snake, named Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world, was thrown down to earth. Its angels were thrown down with it.* We have to ask ourselves, "How can I avoid being deceived?" The answer is to stick close to Christ and His method. *Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

The key elements of Christ's life were;

1. Subservience to the Will of the Father (not self governed by feelings),
2. The Word of God, the scripture as authority (not tradition or philosophy),
3. Prayerful communion (the practice of God's presence),
4. The universality of sin and lack of natural goodness in humanity.
5. The sovereignty of God over all things. We must not allow the poison of the old man to run in our lives but we must put him away and put on the new man *Col 3:10....which is **renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him**.* That will give us Christ's view of the World.

The other world view

Mat 4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

The other World view, we have said, is satanic and it is anti-Christ. It will work to undermine and destroy all that is God's and all that is holy. From the beginning the devil set out to deceive mankind by questioning the Creator's word, "Yeah has God said?" He views God's servants as self-serving lackeys, Job 1:9 *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?* He would have killed Job but for God (Job 2 v 6) and he will try and kill you if he can. Satan is a destroyer and injurer. Luk 9:42 *While he was coming to Jesus, the demon knocked the boy to the ground and threw him into convulsions. Jesus ordered the evil spirit to leave.* Satan steals the words of God from the heart Mar 4:15...*Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*

You and I were born with the devil's World view, which is why you and I must change. Satan's view is seen in the temptations of Christ and it is common in our age.

Mat 4:3.....If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Satan knew full well who Jesus was and this was not a proof of that, it was a test of life style. "Who do you live for Jesus?" Jesus was not taken to a third world refugee camp with millions of starving babies and challenged to use His power for them. It wasn't about helping anybody else. The devil's world view is about using life for one's own gratification and excess. We may not have the power to turn stones to bread but we can certainly use our circumstances for selfish ends and the devil loves that. The devil never helped anyone and never did one good deed. He is a murderer from the beginning.

A trick he plays is to make us discontent with what God has given us and tempt us to disobey God's word (as in Eden). Stones to bread, fruit from the tree, whatever it is I'll take it for me. Life is not lived by bread alone but by every word of God. The devil's World view is selfish and when you are encouraged to be selfish you know who is talking to you. The devil never helped anyone.

Mat 4:6....If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: This didn't happen on a cliff edge, it was on a religious structure and its about our religious view of God. Satan says that God will always protect you with guardian angels. You don't have to be careful in life, bad things do not happen to good people. That was of course, the view of Job's comforters.

The devil sows a World view that God is subject to our foolishness and must preserve us through it. God must underwrite our risk taking. God must suspend the laws of Physics to preserve our stupidity. That little voice that whispers "Go on, it wont do you any harm", "one more won't kill you" is the voice of the devil. It is a voice that disrespects God, whom we should not tempt. It is the voice of a liar and deceiver, who when he sees the broken body at the foot of the cliff will walk away smirking at another job well done. "See you in Hell!"

Mat 4:9.....All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Yes it is the devils world for now, 2Co 4:4 *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.* Yet it is an empire of dirt, fading and worn ready to be cast into the fire. Kingdoms once glorious reduced to crumbling rubble. Is that what you really want? To sell your soul for 15 minutes of pleasure in the here and now?

The devils children already have that world. You have been taken from it and translated elsewhere. Why would you go back? Why would Jesus want a corrupted world for His kingdom when he has a

glorious Kingdom? *1Pe 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,* The devil wants you back in his World. Whenever you hear those whispers, "Its not such a bad life is it?", "Go on enjoy it, you wont be around for ever" the devil is beckoning you back to his kingdom. The devil is encouraging you that he is not such a bad master but when you are lying on your death bed, trying to work out what went wrong and where you will end up, the devil will sneak away and with a wave say "see you soon". No. God alone shall you serve.